

# KMT

A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt

Vol. 8, No. 2  
Summer 1997  
US \$8.00  
Can. \$11.50



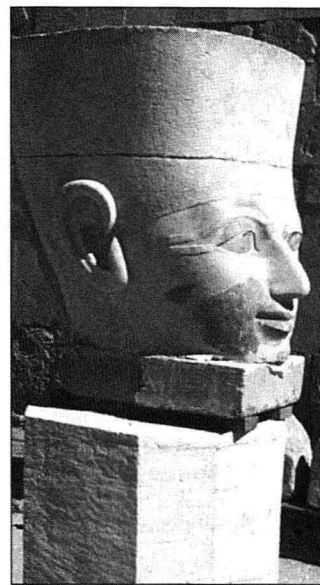
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**Front Cover:** Detail of a painted raised-relief portrait of Thutmose IV, on a sandstone block from that king's dismantled colonnade courtyard, which is currently being reconstructed in the Open Air Museum at the Karnak temple-complex, Luxor. **Back Cover:** Two limestone heads of King Hatshepsut from Osiride statues which once decorated the facade of the third terrace of her mortuary temple at Deir el Bahari, awaiting restoration. *Both photos: KMT/Forbes.*

# ZAH I HAWASS

## *talks to KMT about matters on the Giza Plateau*

**KMT** Over the past three or four years there has been a great deal of controversy in the media concerning the Great Sphinx. It seems to have started when the monument's age was challenged by American John Anthony West and his colleague, Robert Schoch, a Boston University geologist, who stated that the Sphinx was carved from the bedrock of the Giza Plateau in about 10500 B.C. More recent focus has been on so-called secret passages and chambers that allegedly have been found beneath the Sphinx. Would you please comment on these claims and tell KMT readers about current work underway in the Sphinx area?

**HAWASS** Yes, this earlier controversy centered around the assertion made by Schoch and his mentor West that the Sphinx can be dated to some 10000 B.C. and so was built long before Khafre's reign, which is the traditional dating for the creation of this monument. However, according to several geologists who have considered the matter, including Lal Gouri who worked at the Sphinx for two seasons, the monument is not that old — although, of course, the mother-stone of the area certainly is. The limestone in the area of the Sphinx is of variable quality and very

much exposed, which is why it is so badly weathered. Some of these issues have been covered in KMT already, and Mark Lehner and I wrote an article about them in *Archaeology* in 1994 [September/October, 45-47, and relevant discussions on 41-44] in which we dealt with the different weathering patterns and their relevance to the dating of the Sphinx.

About the passages: It seems everyone is now talking about so-called secret passages and chambers under the Sphinx which contain hidden mysteries and the knowledge of a "Lost Civilization." There is nothing like that! There are, indeed, three known passageways located in and around the Sphinx. The first is behind the head and was found in the 1830s by [Richard] Vyse [an early explorer of the Giza Plateau, along with John Perring], who unfortunately used dynamite to see what was there. He found this space empty. Anyone who reads his publication can know about it, the Sphinx-head passage.

The second passageway is under the haunches, lying near the base of the tail. An old man who worked for the Antiquities Service knew of it from his grandfather. Vyse also knew about it, mentioning it in one line in his book. This hole opens

onto a shaft that goes inside the Sphinx body for about nine meters [approximately thirty feet], turning to the right and to the left and ending. The only thing there was a pair of old shoes, probably of Nineteenth Century date. This shaft had likely been used in the Twenty-sixth Dynasty for burials, based on some evidence found. Even in the Late Period the Sphinx had a reputation for being amazing and magical.

The third passage was found in 1926 by [Émile] Baraize. It is located in the middle of the north side of the Sphinx. Baraize discovered it when he was making repairs to the monument, and there is a photograph of his workmen clearing out the tunnel. Again, it was empty! All those persons who are saying that there are secret tunnels and rooms under the Sphinx should read Baraize's reports: if he had found something, wouldn't he have published it? I try to keep an open mind when investigating, but evidence is evidence.

**KMT** Various newspaper articles in Europe and North America have stated in recent months that Graham Hancock, author of *Fingerprints of the Gods*, and his colleague, Robert Bauval, who wrote *The Orion Mystery*, have found evidence of a room



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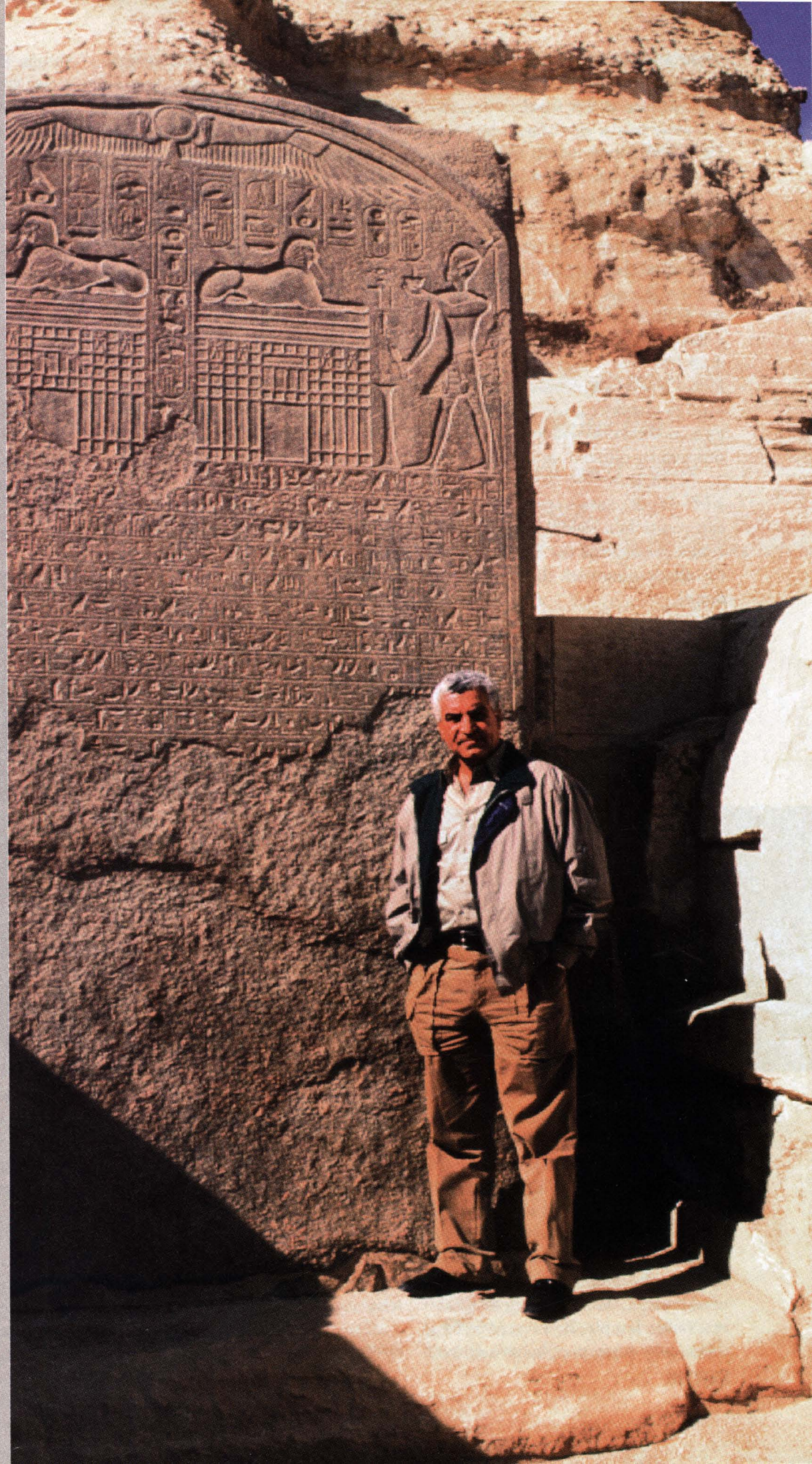
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Dr. Zahi Hawass,  
Director-General  
of the Giza Plateau





under the paw of the Sphinx during a recent survey funded by the Schor Foundation. Is this true?

**HAWASS** No, it is not. There absolutely is no chamber under the paw of the Sphinx. Hancock and Bauval are now pursuing the beliefs of Edgar Cayce, who years ago wrote that at the end of the Twentieth Century a "Hall of Records" would be found in the Sphinx, which would contain historical documents and esoteric wisdom from the lost civilization of Atlantis. There is no evidence for any kind of chamber under the Sphinx paw, as shown by many tests run in the area by different scientists.

**KMT** These controversies aside, what can you tell us about your own recent work around the Sphinx, and the restoration work that's been done?

**HAWASS** We have reopened the north tunnel I mentioned, to take a sampling and to see the condition of the rock, so as to better understand the geology of the area. Baraize was right: there is nothing inside. We have also investigated the area in

a secret door. We also found several stone tools — pounders and hammer-stones, among others — that had been used to carve the Sphinx, and its temple in this front area.

Really, all the evidence points to the Sphinx having been made during the pharaonic period. The Stanford Research Institute has helped us with the work there. We wanted to be careful and non-destructively examine the areas in question, and the people from Stanford helped in this regard. They used sonar, radar and drilled for small cores; and they found that the area in front of the Sphinx is solid, although the stone is not of a very good quality.

The Sphinx is a very fragile monument and must be examined and restored with great care. All the people who truly care for it should work harmoniously together and accept the proofs of what is really there, even if these are not the answers they personally want. There just is no proof, no evidence to contradict

things. But what must first be understood is that I do not personally decide who works at the Sphinx, and anywhere else in Egypt. It is the Permanent Committee of the Supreme Council for Antiquities that decides which applicant gets which concession, or any at all. If people have a problem with what they think I have said or done regarding their desires to work at the Sphinx, they should come and speak directly to me about it and not accuse me of things without first understanding how things are with the Antiquities system here in Egypt. All of us who work for the Supreme Council for Antiquities are only guardians of the monuments of this country. And these monuments are not only a heritage of Egypt, but of the world.

Photos: Salima Ikram



***"The Permanent Committee [of the Supreme Council for Antiquities] does not play favorites. It looks for scholars with worthy projects. It also does not believe that the monuments should be used to make money; they are not for sale to the highest bidder."***

*Zahi Hawass inspects an opening in the side of the Sphinx which leads to a shaft that penetrates about thirty feet inside the monument and then deadends.*

**KMT** How does the Permanent Committee decide who is given permission to work at the monument sites, and

who makes up the Committee?

**HAWASS** The Permanent Committee is made up of twenty-two scholars in different fields. These are persons who are involved in the study of Pharaonic, Coptic and Islamic antiquities of all kinds, as well as engineers, geologists, architects and historians. As a group they give permission to reputable scholars with proper degrees who are attached to a bona

front of the Sphinx — where it is said all the hidden knowledge is. Mark Lehner and I examined the [Thutmose IV] stela and the areas between the Sphinx's paws and immediately in front of them. We even excavated a bit. The stela is definitely a stela, not a secret door, as has been stated. The stone might have come from an reused door or slab originally in Khafre's Valley Temple, however. Maybe this is why some people have said it's

the theory that the Sphinx was made in the Old Kingdom. Even the plan of the Sphinx Temple is similar to that of Khafre's Valley Temple.

**KMT** You've been accused by several persons in the press of stopping them from working at the Sphinx. Have you done this, and if you have, for what reason or reasons?

**HAWASS** People accuse me of many



fide institution to do scientific work in Egypt. Especially since 1983, when this became the law. It is not one person who can accept or reject a proposed project, but only a majority of the Committee makes these determinations.

Also, the Committee sometimes looks for projects that fulfill important needs. For example, now



***“Pharaonic monuments were built by the people of Egypt, not by strangers from outer space! We have found the tools used to build the pyramids, the houses of the builders and even the tombs where they are buried.”***

proposed a theory which he wanted to investigate. But the Committee now feels it was a mistake to allow him access to the Sphinx. No, he is not connected with any institution, and he is not trained as an Egyptologist; but he did bring people with him who are properly trained in their special fields, like geology. West has lots of theories, but very little evi-

ments were built by the ancient people of Egypt, not by any strangers from outer space! We have found the stone and metal tools which were used to build the monuments of the Giza Plateau; we have found the houses where these builders lived, and the homes of the priests who cared for them, and the places where they prepared food and ate; and we

special attention is being paid to proposals for restoring and conserving the monuments, as so many are requiring this kind of work. The Committee does not play favorites, it

looks for scholars with worthy proposals. It does not believe that the monuments of Egypt should be used merely as a source of revenue. If scholars give up their jobs to come here, they are not to be paid. If scholars give up their jobs to come here, they are not to be paid.

generally to finance their next season of work, and there is no problem with that. But it is those persons who want to exploit the monuments for profit that cause the problems; they make problems even for legitimate scholars, because of the way they abuse the monuments to make money.

How is it then that John Anthony West — who is not a reputable scholar with a proper degree, and is not associated with any recognized institution — was initially given permission to do his investigation at the Sphinx, but now is barred from doing any further work on the Sphinx?

ASS It is true that the Permanent Committee gave West permission to do his work at the Sphinx. He

dence to support these. It is fine to study Egyptology and then have theories that might be tested. But West has no Egyptological background, and to test his theories about a monument of Egypt without formal training and full knowledge of the ancient civilization is not good for that monument. The Permanent Committee decided it has made a mistake in West's case, and it has become much stricter about such suggestions.

There is the situation with the Florida State University project to make a map of the underground topography of the Giza Plateau, using radar. They were given permission, and they came and did that, and now some persons are making a big thing out of it, but shouldn't. The Florida team was made up of established scholars from a recognized institution, and what they did was serious scientific investigation. The Permanent Committee does not want to stop serious scholars from doing legitimate work; but it will not permit persons with agendas built around discovering some so-called “secret knowledge” of ancient Egypt, which is supposed to either foretell the future, or to link us with space aliens, or which have something to do with strange initiation ceremonies. Pharaonic monu-

have even found the tombs where they are buried.

KMT What are your responses to the claims that the pyramids were not, in fact, built by the ancient Egyptians?

HAWASS This is mostly said about the Great Pyramid. These people do not believe that it was built by and for Khufu in the Fourth Dynasty.

However, all they have is their theory, without any evidence for some alternative builder. Khufu's name is written in the relieving chambers above the burial chamber. This could have been put there only by the builders of the pyramid. No one went in later and wrote Khufu's name as a joke. Also, his name is in hieroglyphs, in the same sort of writing style that is found on other monuments at Giza, and these inscriptions all seem to have been put there by the workers who were building the monuments of the Plateau. The pottery and other artifacts from the pyramid area point to it having been built by people; as I said before, we have found where these builders lived, ate, drank and died. Khufu's pyramid is surrounded by the [mastaba] tombs of people related to him, or else who worked for him. The Great Pyramid is only one





During recent clearances to bedrock around the base of the Pyramid of Menkaure, an unfinished dyad statue was discovered (left and below), which had begun to be carved from one of the granite casing stones which once covered the pyramid's lower courses. For whatever reason the sculpture was abandoned, possibly because it cracked through its middle. Although it is uninscribed, it has been attributed by its Egyptian excavators to the Ramesside period, based on style, and may represent Rameses II and a god (Re-Atum?). If so, it would be the first evidence of that king's presence on the Giza Plateau.

part of an entire funerary complex. In fact Khufu's name has been found on the causeway which led to the pyramid, in formal hieroglyphs. We have even found evidence of a ramp on the south side of Khufu's pyramid, which was used in its construction

their sheer size that makes it difficult to believe that they were put up by human beings without modern technology? But then, look at all the other huge ancient monuments — not just in Egypt, but throughout the





news should have been announced in Egypt, with the permission of the Supreme Council for Antiquities; and, secondly, the factual information should have been presented rather than sheer speculation. By making a media circus, Gattenberg not only violated the terms of his contract with the German Institute, but he also broke faith with the rest of the investigating team. For now the humdly problem has temporarily been resolved, but any project of further investigating this curious "doorway" is currently on hold. The Great Pyramid is still a German concession, and whenever Dr. Stadelman has the personnel, finances and technology to further pursue the interior conservation, we will, *inshallah*.

**KMT** Could you tell us about the work you are personally doing on the Giza Plateau these days?

**HAWASS** I have been continuing my excavations of the tombs of the workmen who built the pyramids. We have studied both the tombs

themselves and the skeletons which they contained. The National Research Center is assisting us and to date the people there have examined some 600 skeletons belonging to the pyramid workmen. They have found the average age at death of these individuals was between thirty and thirty-five years, an average for most peasants and laborers in antiquity. The very interesting thing that has been found is that there were probably physicians at the pyramids building sites, who would immediately take care of any workers injured in accidents. Some of the skeletons showed injuries to hands and legs. Splints had been used to set breaks, and one unfortunate man had to have one of his legs amputated — although he seems to have lived for fourteen years after this amputation! These studies tell us a lot about the health of the workmen, as well as

about the medical profession at that time. They also emphasize the point that all of these monuments here on the Plateau were built by persons who were real and suffered in life.

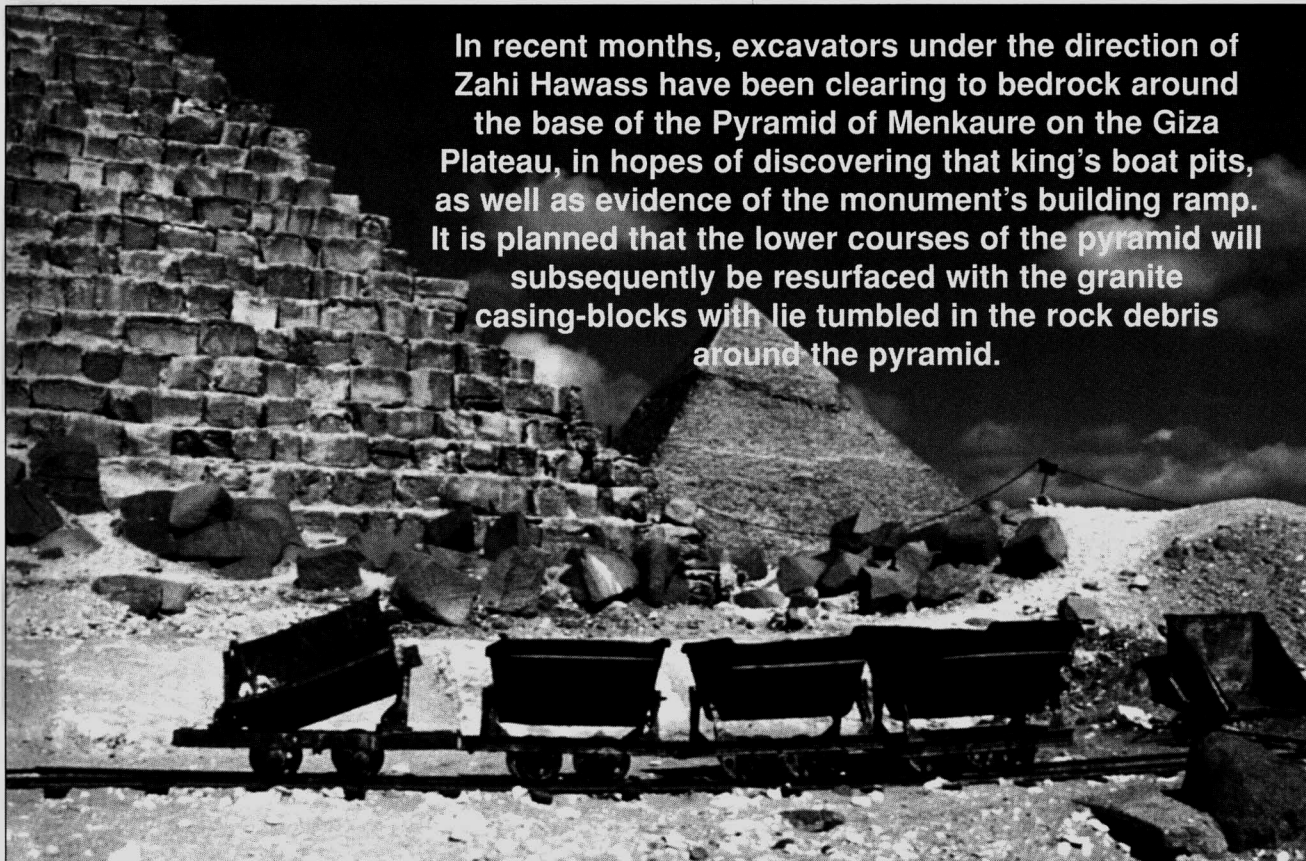
We are doing other work in the pyramids area, especially to find the location of building ramps. We have found that Khufu's was on the south side of his pyramid, and so was that of Menkaure. Khafre's ramp seems to have been on the east, but we are still investigating it.

**KMT** Was it during ramp investigations at Menkaure's pyramid that you came upon the Rameses II granite dyad that was reported in KMT's "Nile Currents"?

**HAWASS** Absolutely! It was wonderful. We found the statue and near it some tools, as well as a lot of granite powder and chips that resulted from the statue's manufacture.

We are also working in the area to the west of the Great Pyramid, investigating tombs dating from Dynasty IV to XVII. We have found the tombs of viziers, of *wab* priests and other priests. So far we have found sixty-five tombs that do not seem to have been noted previously. We found the tomb and a

Photo: Salima Ikram



**In recent months, excavators under the direction of Zahi Hawass have been clearing to bedrock around the base of the Pyramid of Menkaure on the Giza Plateau, in hopes of discovering that king's boat pits, as well as evidence of the monument's building ramp. It is planned that the lower courses of the pyramid will subsequently be resurfaced with the granite casing-blocks with lie tumbled in the rock debris around the pyramid.**





View of the Western Cemetery at Giza, where SCA excavators directed by Zahi Hawass recently unearthed the previously unrecorded Tomb of Kai, a Sixth Dynasty priest of the mortuary cult of King Khufu of the Fourth Dynasty. A protective wooden door (visible at right of center) has been placed over the entrance to Kai's well-decorated offering chapel.

beautiful basalt statue of a dwarf named Perniankhw, whose title is "Who pleases His Majesty everyday." Perhaps he was a court jester. Artistically, his statue can be dated to the reign of Khafre.

Also we found another tomb which I like to call the "Nefertari of Giza," because it is so beautifully decorated. It [the offering chapel] is very small, but like a jewel. It belongs to a man named Kai, or Kapuniswtkay, who was a priest of [the mortuary cult of] Khufu. Besides its decoration, it is also a very interesting tomb because at the entrance is a biographical inscription with a section that says: "It is the tombmakers, the draftsmen, the craftsmen, the sculptors who made my tomb. I gave them beer and bread. I caused them to make an oath that they were satisfied." This is a unique statement, as far as I know, an actual reference to the workmen and the contract for the building of a tomb.

This Tomb of Kai has beautiful scenes of this man and a lady embracing, as well as other fine carvings in raised relief. Behind the false door we found a marvelous painted- lime-

stone statue depicting Kai sitting on a chair, with his daughter seated on the ground next to his left leg, and his son standing to his right side. This tomb is my favorite at Giza. It is so incredible to find such a text, and such beautiful reliefs and a statue all belonging to this priest of Khufu.

**KMT** Can you share with us your future plans for excavating on the Plateau?

**HAWASS** This spring we will continue work excavating around the base of the Third Pyramid, the Pyramid of Menkaure. The work there has been divided into three phases. The first phase has been excavating in hopes of finding Menkaure's boat pits on the west side of the pyramid, the only one on the Plateau for which no boat pits have been discovered so far. We want to determine if this was deliberate, and to look for evidence that, in fact, boat pits do exist. We have already checked the west side [of the pyramid] and found no boats there.

The second phase is to look for the building ramp. We have un-

covered a portion of it on the pyramid's south side, and we want to pursue this, because Khafre's ramp was also on the south side of his pyramid.



Both photos: George B. Johnson

"The Nefertari of Giza" is how Plateau Director Zahi Hawass characterizes the recently discovered Tomb of Kai in the Great Western Cemetery. Dating to the Sixth Dynasty, its owner, Kai (above) was a priest in the mortuary cult of King Khufu. The modestly sized mastaba's offering chapel is small but beautifully decorated with painted raised-reliefs, as seen opposite in a vignette of Kai and his wife.







The third and final phase is the conservation plan, which we have already started parts of. As is well-known, Menkaure's pyramid was faced with at least sixteen courses of red granite. One of the main projects of the conservation plan is to map all of the fallen granite blocks lying on the southern and western sides of the pyramid, and then to make a photogrammetric map of the pyramid's faces. Eventually we want to put all of the fallen blocks of stone back onto the surface of the pyramid, in their original position if possible: reconstruction by anastolysis.

We are also planning to close Menkaure's pyramid to the public for a year. In fact, I hope to close each pyramid [in turn] for a year. The problem on the Plateau is archaeology versus tourism, a difficult problem. The more tourists who visit the insides of the pyramids and other monuments on the Plateau, the more damage is done to them. I personally feel that pyramids should be viewed only from the outside, as was the case in ancient times; but, of course, the tourists are understandably curious about what is inside these great monuments. But visitors to Khufu's pyramid have caused a ninety-five percent humidity level in the interior! Khafre's humidity level reached eighty-five percent, which caused a block of stone to fall inside. That is why the interior of Khafre's pyramid has been closed to tourists for a year. If we give every pyramid a rest from visitors for a year [every three years], that should help lengthen their lifespan.

**KMT** Was the interior humidity-level why you closed the Pyramid of Unas at Sakkara?

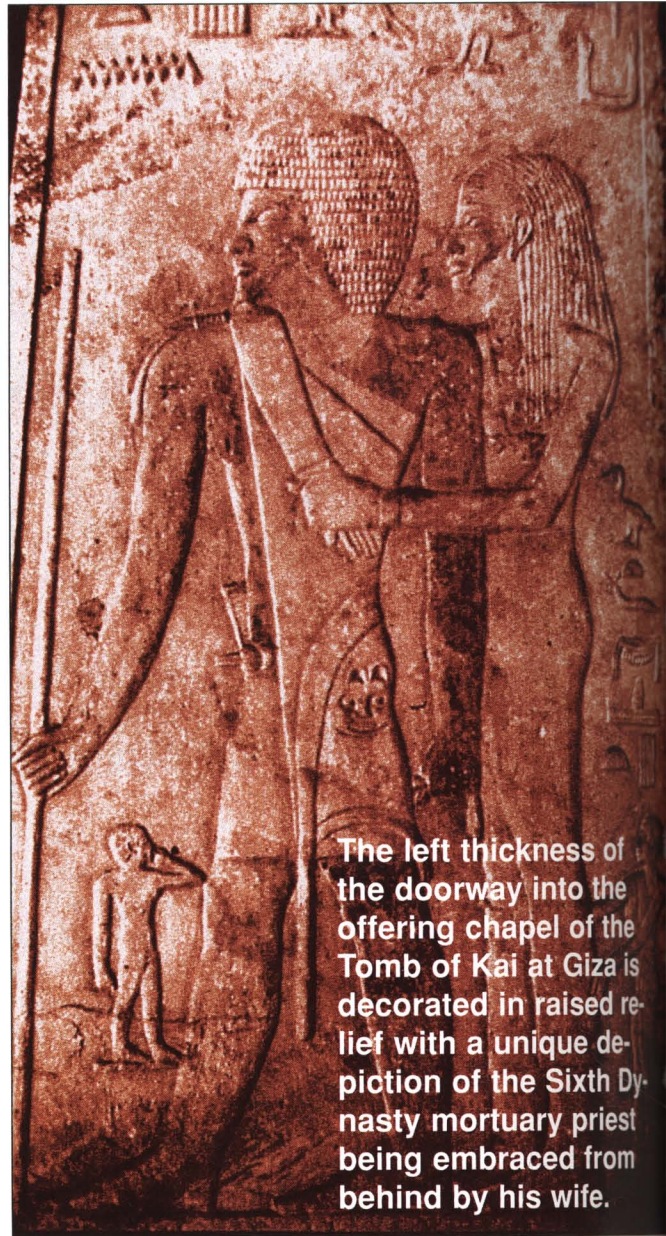
**HAWASS** Precisely. Unas's burial chamber contains the finest set of *Pyramid Texts*. These were suffering from increased humidity, so I had to close the pyramid down. Now people can visit the Pyramid of Teti, which also had *Pyramid Texts* in the burial chamber, although not so fine as

those of Unas. Now that we have opened Dahshur to the public, I am hoping that people will visit inside the Red Pyramid of Sneferu, instead of wanting to go inside the Giza pyramids.

**KMT** Is there other work planned on the Plateau for the near future?

**HAWASS** Certainly. Again at Menkaure, we want to reclear and reexamine the cemetery around the pyramid. [George] Reisner excavated the area [earlier this century] but never published his findings. When we have recleared it, we want to plan the tombs and copy their decoration for publication, and restore whatever is possible. This is, of course, a very big project, and will take at least ten years to accomplish.

I am also planning to excavate further in front of the Valley Temple of Khafre, where we found the ramps and the tunnels under these. This area might have been a harbor for the pyramid complexes. The two ramps leading east from the entrance to the Valley Temple seem to lead to pylons, which would be the earliest examples of pylons known in Egyptian history. Further excavations at this site should shed some light on early temple-architecture, as well as answer some questions about what this area was used for.



The left thickness of the doorway into the offering chapel of the Tomb of Kai at Giza is decorated in raised relief with a unique depiction of the Sixth Dynasty mortuary priest being embraced from behind by his wife.

There are several hypotheses: that it is the *Ra-sh*, the mouth of the lake mentioned in the Abusir papyri; that it is the harbor to the Nile and the entrance to the Plateau; that it is the delivery area for the pyramids complex; that the tunnels were used for storing water used in purification rites — all kinds of things.

It has also been suggested that the tunnels really are not tunnels at all, but symbolic boats, an elaborate metaphor in stone symbolizing the king's control over the northern and southern parts of Egypt by his use of boats. Whatever, we might just find the answer by excavating further,



and this is what we are planning to do.

And I also want to do some more work at the Sphinx. We are now planning to clear the north tunnel of the Sphinx, the one that Baraize found, and that some people are saying leads to the “Hall of Records.” One opinion says we should not open this “Hall” if we find it, as it contains the secrets of lost civilizations [which should remain secret]; and another viewpoint is that we should do so, so that the “true answers” to the mysteries of the universe are revealed. And then some persons are saying that we have not looked for this “Hall of Records” because we are afraid [of what we would find]. As I said earlier, when this tunnel was discovered and cleared in the 1920s, nothing of importance was found at that time. However, inasmuch as we need to check on the interior of the Sphinx, and to take [rock] samples for testing, we might as well settle some of these claims at the same time; and, once this tunnel is cleared, people will finally be convinced of the non-existence of the so-called “Hall of Records. As far as is now known, the tunnel does not date from Dynasty IV, but from the Late Period.

We will continue, of course, our work of restoring the Sphinx, which has been ongoing since the late 1980s.

**KMT** What about the Workmen’s Cemetery? Is it safe to assume that you intend to continue excavating there? And what are your plans regarding publication of your finds from that site?

**HAWASS** Yes, I expect to continue working there. It is a unique site because it tells us so much about the workers, technicians and craftsmen who built the pyramids of Giza.

About publishing, I intend to do a scientific work on the excavations; but this takes a great deal of time, as a great deal of research goes into that kind of publication.

However, I have already begun work on a popular book on the subject, which will be published by the American University in Cairo Press. It will be titled *Giza Pyramids, Mysteries Revealed* and in it I will discuss the ten years of our excavations and what we have found. I want to explain what has been done in recent years on the Giza Plateau, and how it was accomplished. I want this book to reveal to the public all the finds in this area.

I, and other Egyptologists, too, get accused of trying to hide things from the public; in this book I will make everything [about the Plateau] known.

I have also just finished four articles regarding the work done at the Workmen’s Cemetery, and the final scholarly publication on the site should be out in approximately two years. This summer I will be working on another book while I am at UCLA, on the Tomb of Kai, the beautiful one in the Western Cemetery that I mentioned before. It will be published by the French and will be in color. I am really looking forward to working on that publication! I realize that publications do not always keep up with our excavations, themselves, but I try to make up for that with regular announcements in the press of important finds, and by giving several lectures [on these] each year, worldwide.

**KMT** How did you happen to get into the profession of Egyptology?

**HAWASS** Hmm. Well, the truth is that, when I first went to university, I decided to study archaeology because you also had to study lots of languages, as well. I was not very enthusiastic about the subject at first, but, as I studied, I became more interest-

ed. Then, in 1970, I was told to work at Kom Abu Bellu in the Delta, where I was associate director. I worked there until 1975, at which time I had become director of the site. I think it was during that time that I really fell in love with archaeology. There were always challenges, always problems to solve, objects needing rescuing, something amazing emerging from the soil. The site was amazing, with a little of everything: pharaonic, Greek, Roman. I learned a lot about excavating, a lot about the different periods, and learned to deal with the practical problems that come with managing a large archeological site. It was after that period [of excavation] that I became totally addicted and devoted to archaeology.

**KMT** When did you come to Giza?

**HAWASS** In 1973 there was a theft in the Great Pyramids area. I was working as an inspector at Abu Simbel at that time and the Antiquities Organization asked me to work at Giza because it was felt that a strong person was needed here. So I was assigned here after that, and then I left to go to the United States, where I

***“Inasmuch as we need to take rock samples from inside the Sphinx, we might as well settle these claims [about a secret ‘Hall of Records’] at the same time.”***

did my Masters and Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. Some of the most useful things I learned there were about site management, something I am very concerned with at Giza. I now teach it and practice it here in Egypt. I have been here at the Pyramids again since the late-1970s, and hope to remain here for a long time, in order to care for this most important site — and to see what the sands keep yielding up!